

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 091060

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CSCE, ECE, ENRG, XH

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV PROPOSAL FOR AN ENERGY CONFERENCE

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REFERENCES: A) GENEVA 5019; B) STATE 9050; C) BRUSSELS 6636

1. DEPARTMENT APPRECIATES AMBASSADOR'S THOUGHTFUL CABLE ON
POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS BEARING ON PROPOSED ENERGY CON-
FERENCE. MESSAGE HAS RECEIVED HIGH-LEVEL ATTENTION HERE AND
WE WISH TO SHARE WITH YOU THE FACTORS WHICH LED TO INSTRUC-
TIONS FOR DEALING WITH THIS ISSUE AT UPCOMING 33RD ECE

PLENARY. (REF B)

2. DEPARTMENT HAS, OVER PAST SIX MONTHS, CAREFULLY CONSIDERED DETAILED POLITICAL AND TECHNICAL PROS AND CONS OF SUCH A HIGH-LEVEL ENERGY MEETING. BEHIND THE BREZHNEV PROPOSAL LIES THE IDEA OF EUROPEAN-WIDE COOPERATION IN VAST JOINT PROJECTS, A GOAL THE SOVIETS HAVE PURSUED FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS. IN DEPARTMENT'S VIEW SOVIETS HOPED THAT HAD BREZHNEV PROPOSALS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE WESTERN EUROPEANS IT COULD HAVE ISOLATED EUROPE FROM NORTH AMERICA THROUGH INVOLVING THE WEST IN JOINT EXPLOITATION OF RAW MATERIALS (SOVIETS) WHILE AT SAME TIME GAINING ACCESS TO WESTERN TECHNOLOGY.

3. A FURTHER SOVIET OBJECTIVE HAS BEEN TO TRY TO USE THE BREZHNEV PROPOSAL FOR CONFERENCES ON ENERGY, TRANSPORT AND THE ENVIRONMENT TO GAIN THE INITIATIVE IN CSCE DISCUSSIONS AND THEREBY TO DRAW ATTENTION FROM OTHER ISSUES SUCH AS HUMAN RIGHTS AND PRACTICAL PROBLEMS IN BASKETS II AND III ON WHICH THE SOVIETS FEEL VULNERABLE AND DO NOT WISH TO MAKE PROGRESS. THE SOVIETS HAVE FROM THE BEGINNING ATTEMPTED TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE FOR THE THREE "BREZHNEV CONFERENCES" AS SEPARATE POLITICAL LEVEL UNDERTAKINGS. THEY DID NOT WANT THEM TO BE TAKEN UP IN THE ECE (AND WOULD STILL PREFER THAT THEY NOT BE) WHERE OPPORTUNITIES TO GAIN POLITICAL CAPITAL AND CREATE SERIOUS DIVISIONS AMONG THE CONFIDENTIAL

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ALLIES WOULD BE LESS THAN IN SPECIALLY CREATED FORA.

4. IN THE ENERGY AREA, OUR TECHNICAL ANALYSIS HAS INDICATED THAT THE VALUE OF A MEETING TO THE U.S. WOULD BE MARGINAL AT BEST. RISKS TO WEST INCLUDE POSSIBLE DIVERSION OF ATTENTION FROM THE WORK OF EXISTING INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE USE OF A CONFERENCE BY THE SOVIETS FOR POLITICAL RHETORIC. ALSO, IT WOULD BE AWKWARD AND POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE FOR THE WESTERN NATIONS TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH A CONFERENCE BEFORE THEY HAD REACHED SOME CONSENSUS ON THE SOVIET ENERGY SITUATION AND HOW THE WEST SHOULD DEAL WITH IT.

5. WHILE THERE MIGHT WELL BE A SHORT-TERM POSITIVE IMPACT ON OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIETS IF WE WERE TO ACCEDE TO THE BREZHNEV ENERGY CONFERENCE PROPOSAL, TO GET OUT IN FRONT OF THE EUROPEANS ON THIS WOULD RAISE UNWARRANTED SUSPICIONS AMONG OUR ALLIES. MOREOVER, IT IS PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT BEEN ACTIVELY PRESSING FOR U.S. ENDORSEMENT OF THE PROPOSAL. SINCE BELGRADE, THE PROPOSAL HAS BEEN MENTIONED ONLY IN AN INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTACT IN MOSCOW AND WE HAVE RECEIVED NO

OFFICIAL APPROACHES. IF ANYTHING, POOR SOVIET PERFORMANCE AT THE BELGRADE MEETING ON HUMAN RIGHTS, AND ON OTHER ISSUES OF CONCERN TO THE WEST WOULD ARGUE, AS SOME ALLIES HAVE POINTED OUT, FOR A NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSAL.

6. DESPITE THESE CONSIDERATIONS, WE HAVE RECOGNIZED, AS POINTED OUT IN REFTEL B, THAT SOME OF OUR ALLIES MIGHT SEE ADVANTAGES IN A MORE POSITIVE APPROACH TO THE ENERGY CONFERENCE PROPOSAL. OUR INITIAL GUIDANCE (REF D), WHICH WAS CLEARED AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS, TOOK ACCOUNT OF THESE ALLIED CONCERNS AND CONCLUDED THAT THE U.S. SHOULD LEAVE IT TO THE EC-9 TO TAKE THE LEAD. THE REASONING BEHIND THIS DECISION WAS THAT THE U.S. WOULD NOT WISH TO PROMOTE THE ENERGY CONFERENCE FOR ITS OWN REASONS, BUT WOULD WISH
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TO MAINTAIN SOLIDARITY WITH OUR ALLIES. SHOULD THE EC-9 PROPOSE TO REFER THE QUESTIONS TO THE ECE (WHERE DISCUSSION OF A DECISION COULD BE CAREFULLY CONTROLLED) WE WOULD AGREE. THE PRESENT REPORTED POSITION OF THE EC-9 APPEARS (REF C) CONSISTENT WITH CURRENT U.S. GUIDANCE IN REF B.

7. IF THE EC-9 TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO PRESS FOR AN ENERGY CONFERENCE UNDER ECE AUSPICES, (WHICH NOW APPEARS UNLIKELY), WITH APPROPRIATE SAFEGUARDS WE WOULD STILL BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER THEIR REASONING AND POSITION. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE OUTCOME OF BELGRADE AND OUR CURRENT CONCERN OVER SOME ASPECTS OF SOVIET POLICY, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT A U.S. INITIATIVE ON THE ENERGY CONFERENCE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE AT THIS TIME OR THAT IT WOULD LEAD THE SOVIETS TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING ON OTHER ISSUES. WE ALSO SEE NO REASON TO URGE THE EC-9 TO A POSITIVE DECISION ON THE PROPOSAL.

8. AS WE LOOK TOWARDS MADRID, THE UNRESOLVED QUESTION OF POSSIBLE HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS MIGHT PROVE SOMEWHAT USEFUL AS A CARROT. BUT, AS WAS OBVIOUS AT BELGRADE, WHEN WESTERN DRAFTS INDICATED SOME FLEXIBILITY, IT DOES NOT APPEAR IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO MOSCOW TO GAIN MEASURABLE SOVIET CONCESSIONS.

9. IN SUM, THE PLENARY HAS SOME SIGNIFICANCE IN OUR RELATIONS WITH THE USSR, BUT WE SHOULD NOT OVERESTIMATE ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE OVERALL CONTEXT. THE POSITIVE POTENTIAL OF AN ENERGY MEETING HAS BEEN EXPLORED, AND FOUND WANTING, BOTH IN INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS AND IN ACTION AT BELGRADE. HOWEVER, IN THE EVENT OUR MOST IMPORTANT ALLIES AGREE AT SOME POINT THAT THEY WISH TO BE MORE
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POSITIVE OR FORTHCOMING, WE ARE PREPARED TO CONSIDER THEIR
VIEWS AND REASONING. VANCE

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